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**The role of identity and self-reflection in museum selfies:
Netnographic insights from Instagram**

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Abstract

The role of identity and self-reflection in museum selfies: Netnographic insights from Instagram

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Art museum provides excellent stage for identity work. Art can be mediation to reflect people's identities. It is an expression of our thoughts, emotions, intuitions, and desires, and it's about sharing the way we experience the world, which for many is an extension of personality. Taking selfies at museums where great artworks are displayed can be a way to integrate ourselves to the meaning of that artworks. Furthermore, online social media, where identity work emerges frequently, provides proper circumstances for visual communication. In this respect, our investigation seeks to contribute to a holistic, contextualized and cultural perspective of museum selfie phenomenon by integrating the meaning of art, location-based technology on social media, and online identity work. The findings of this paper provide two emerging themes; spatial self and transcendence emotion. The "Spatial-self" theme describes three types of Instagram posts that present users' locations by how they used geo-tagging, @, and hashtags. The author introduced a sub-theme of "Museum itself matters" as well. The "Spatial self" reveals the

importance of museum spaces and in this theme, the author further analyzes the posts' meanings. As for the theme of "Transcendent emotion", the author extends the analysis to explore how people appreciate artworks and then reflect the transcendent emotions that result in identity presentation by creating 6 sub-themes; "Artwork and artist as a mediation to express identity", "Usage of Quotes", "Expressing life purposes and dreams", "Back to the past", "Selfies as artwork" and "Imitation". The interpretations and implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords: Museum Selfie, Identity Work, Instagram

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Chapter I: Introduction

Alain de Botton and Armstrong (2013), in their book “Art as therapy”, saw the art as mediation to reflect people’s identities. They said, “We are not transparent to ourselves. We have intuitions, suspicions hunches, vague musings, and strangely mixed emotions, all of which resist simple definition” (Chapter 5, para. 1). Meanwhile, art is an expression of our thoughts, emotions, intuitions, and desires, and it’s about sharing the way we experience the world, which for many is an extension of personality. Art is a means to state an opinion or a feeling, or else to create a different view of the world, whether it be inspired by the work of other people or something invented that’s entirely new. For example, Alexander Pope identified a central function of poetry as taking thoughts we experience as half-formed and giving them clear expression: what was often thought, but never so well expressed. In other words, a fugitive and elusive part of our own thinking, our own experiences, is taken up, edited, and returned to us better than it was before, so that we feel, at last, that we know ourselves more clearly.

In this respect, the study of identity work is an area where arts-based research is gaining ground (Holm, Sahlström, & Zilliacus, 2018, Kozinets, Gretzel, & Dinhopf, 2017)). Furthermore, online social media, where identity-reflecting content emerges frequently, provides proper circumstances for visual communication. Our investigation seeks to contribute to a holistic, contextualized and cultural perspective of museum selfie phenomenon integrating the meaning of art, technological characteristics of social media, and online identity work. The view the author proposes is that art has a crucial meaning to human and society, and taking selfies at museums where great artworks are displayed can be a way to integrate ourselves to the meaning of that artworks. This connection can form our identity in a way that other things cannot. This

identity can be presented through social media platform with assistance of new technology systems.

Selfie taking is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon embedded in a wider set of evolving contemporary social practices (Kozinets et al., 2017). Museums, obviously, are sites in which art, culture, and photography have a long history. Drawing inspiration from the work of Kozinets et al. (2017), the author chose to examine selfie taking in the context of art museums focusing on how people connect their experiences at the art museums to their online identity works.

Objective and Intended Contribution

The aim of this thesis is to build on Kozinets et al. (2017). The objective of this netnography is to gather insights regarding perspectives of people's identity work as seen by their posts to Instagram. The intended contribution is to help understand museum selfie phenomenon and how people utilize museum selfies as a tool for identity work on Instagram which is an image/text dominant social media platform with various types of tagging options. Theoretical contributions are in the areas of 1) geo-tagging system in location-based technology, 2) transcending content and emotion on self-presentation and identity work. Reasons for the need for this research include vast social and cultural justifications for understanding the underlying psychological and communicational mechanism of museum selfie phenomenon on Instagram.

Social and cultural justifications

Museum selfie phenomenon is prevalent on Instagram, and yet many researchers have not shed a light on this topic in the perspective of identity work and self-presentation in communication field. Instagram currently features 73,710 posts that are tagged with the

hashtag “#museumselfie”. Rounds (2006) suggests that museums are important sites of “identity work” which encompasses the psychological “processes through which we construct, maintain, and adapt our sense of personal identity, and persuade other people to believe in that identity”. Museums have been found to be the most important site where selfie-taking behavior emerges. Instagram also features 24,500 posts that are tagged with the hashtag “#museumselfieday”. Museum selfie day is annually celebrated on January 21st. Started by London blogger Mar Dixon, this trend has gone worldwide and spawned a plethora of creative posts on social media ever since. Museums, archaic by nature, have always moved slowly to adopt new rules. Their “no photography” signs were implemented to discourage flash pictures, which degrade the quality of conserved works. But in today’s world of high-sensitivity smartphone cameras, many more museums are relaxing their rules on photography in an effort to encourage more engagement with the public.

Postings on social media platform is often used as a tool for self-presentation and identity work. As museum selfie posts are increasing vastly, it is crucial to understand the communication implications — as reflected by their images, texts, comments, hashtags, and tagging options. This connection between photographs, art, communications, and the identity work are key elements of our investigation. This can be an integrative research on online identity work focused on the cultural perspective.

Roadmap of paper

The paper proceeds as follows. Next, is a condensed literature review that includes three main areas in this literature-- 1) selfie, 2) online identity work and impression management, 3) Instagram and mixed use of social networks. Then is a summary of the theoretical lens of 1)

spatial-self using location-based technology and 2) transfer of transcending emotion to identity work through artwork that informs and guides the research. In this section, we examine theory linking identity and location-based technology, and artworks and transcendence emotion. First, the author extends a “spatial self” perspective (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015) taking its interlinked notions of self-presentation, identity strategy and geo-tagging in a technological direction. The author considers whether the hall of presenting place or location information through social media platform might reveal something about the contemporary adult identity. Second, the author applies Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, & Oliver’s (2017) transcending content perspective taking its argumentation linking inspiring content and transcendence emotion. This paper seeks to explore how this emotion elicited by appreciating art transfers to online identity work. The theoretical framework is followed by an overview of the method, which is a netnography or a study of an online community (Instagram on which people post their museum selfies). The methods and data analysis overview are then followed by the findings. The author identified two meta-themes, and as such, the results are organized by these two meta-themes which include four lower-order themes for each. The author concludes the chapter with a discussion of the findings, limitations, and avenues for future research.

Chapter II: Literature Review

Cultural Meaning of Selfies

Selfies, digital images characterized by the desire to frame the self in a picture taken to be shared with an online audience, are important reflections of the contemporary self (Kozinets et al., 2017). Yet they are more than mere self-reflection. They are intended for wider audiences, as if they were a form of art. We can think of the artistic self-portrait as an instructive starting point for thinking about the historical context of today's selfie (Iqani & Schroeder, 2015). Carbon (2017) provided deeper understanding of selfies using the historical examples of self-portraits in the West which were typified by painters such as Rembrandt. They used self-portraiture to enshrine themselves as artists, as well as to reveal the inner depths of their character. Emphasizing the artful element of selfies, Carbon (2017) finds that selfies aim to communicate and express complex, multidimensional cultural messages similar to those of self-portraits. This paper focused on the connection between photographs, art, communications, and the self.

Much extant research on selfies has focused on exploring motivations for selfie-posting (Pounders, Kowalczyk, & Stowers, 2016), and some research provides evidence for the role of narcissism in predicting selfie posting behavior (Halpern, Valenzuela, & Katz, 2016). Some investigated self-esteem related effects of selfie posting (Burrow and Rainone, 2017, Wang, Yang, & Haigh, 2017). As Kozinets et al. (2017) criticized, this research trend on selfies has taken a pathologizing view of the phenomenon, focusing on its relationship to narcissism and negative mental aspects. Specifically, research that focused on linking selfie production to shallow relationships, lack of intimacy, loneliness, anorexia, risks to mental health, and a general lack of mental well-being (Adamkolo & Elmi-Nur, 2015) have limited people's views on selfie

as negative and superficial one. This has been obscuring some interesting aspects of cultural and communicating role of selfies.

However, recent psychological research has begun to offer more broaden views of the selfie phenomenon. For example, Barry, Doucette, Loflin, Rivera-Hudson, & Herrington, (2017) found that posting selfies is a “typical way of communicating with others” and generally not related to narcissism. More importantly, the selfie assemblage (Hess, 2015) provides a wider perspective of selfie connecting it to place and technology by highlighting that selfies are an expression of the self, but also involve an expression of a place and the interaction of the self with a place, technology (e.g., smartphones), and people (e.g., social networks). Their study emphasized the importance of context for representation in selfies. This paper also focuses on the multidimensional aspects of Instagram selfies such as social networks, technology, place, and identity.

Regarding social media perspective, our discussion of selfies views them as communicative outlets not only of individual identity, but of individual aspects of the networked self (Papacharissi, 2010). The author sees selfies as “characterized by the desire to frame the self in a picture taken to be shared with an online audience (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).” There is evidence that selfie-taking is a self-expressing and self-defining activity. Empirical study showed that selfies reflect the selfie-takers’ “actual” and “ideal” selves and their personal and social identities (Qiu, Lu, Yang, Qu, & Zhu, 2015). As Kozinets et al. (2017) emphasized, online selves are ever more carefully curated (e.g., social media users edit their photos before they upload them and care about the number of likes the postings receive).

Regarding the interaction of the self with a place point of view, the element of the physical space has received little attention in psychological research on selfie taking (Qiu et al., 2015). They found that individuals high in conscientiousness were more likely to take selfies in public locations and to provide location information, whereas individuals high in neuroticism were less likely to provide location information.

However, research that relates selfie-taking to the meaning of place is important. This is because first, a selfie is a special form of photography that shows the self in a place, and as such, a selfie naturally is a means of expressing a connection of the self to a place. Second, qualitative psychological research has shown that photography “is a practice through which people actively engage in constructing meanings about identities, community, and belonging to place” (Sonn, Quayle, & Kasat, 2015). Finally, theoretical evidence demonstrates the importance of places for individuals’ identities (Stiglbauer & Weber, 2018).

Keeping up with this selfie research trend and need, Kozinets et al. (2017) tried to do an alternative approach that would be useful in recontextualizing selfie. They chose to examine selfie taking in the context of contemporary art museums drawing inspiration from the work of Rounds (2006) and Burness (2016) which connects the art museum to identity work and from Hromack (2014) that relates selfie to owning the art. According to Rounds (2006), museum visitors can transfer the special aura of importance that the displayed objects hold onto themselves. Selfies allow individuals to weave museum objects into their own identity. Foster (2014) states that museums as physical and cultural locations provide opportunities to both confirm existing identities and explore alternative selves; they are spaces of identity enactment. Contemporary selfie taking is a complex, enculturated, and multidimensional phenomenon.

Hence, the author approaches to museum selfie phenomenon with a cultural discourse and ethnographic methodology.

Online Identity Work

Identity is an active, ongoing process constructed through social practice. The study of identity is an area where arts-based research is gaining ground (Holm, et al., 2018, Kozinets et al., 2017). Art builds up self-knowledge, and is an excellent way of communicating the resulting fruit to other people (De Botton & Armstrong, 2013, Chapter. 5, para 6). Kozinets et al. (2017) also argue that cultural communications such as art and symbols are used as sources of ‘symbolic resources’ by people, who seek in them “new ideas with which to advance their identity project.” In this research, the author builds on the notion, also developed by Kozinets et al. (2004) that physical spaces and objects are also used as symbolic resources in contemporary identity projects. Exploring identity through the use of art is a try to understand how identity is continually in the process of construction through encounters with objects and places. As the author discussed, identity work, like serial selfie taking, is processual and always exist as works in progress. Ustuner and Holt (2007) also suggested that the term “identity project” refers to the self-narratives that people form as they continuously develop their identities by projecting “the constructed past into the imagined future”. People are actively engaging in this continuous act of story building and storytelling in our culture.

Impression Management

Psychological impression management theory argues that people are inclined to create and share impressions of themselves which are biased in the direction of their desired identities (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Selfie has a myriad implication on impression management. Murray

(2015) portrays selfies as effective outlets of self-definition, creative forms of self-fashioning, and therefore powerful means of self-expression. “Extended self” perspective (Belk, 1988; 2013) posits selfies as digital possessions that play an important role in establishing and signaling identity. Our identity work investigation enriches this perspective. What messages are conveyed by selfies taken with art? What emotion can be elicited by artwork and art museum and how this emotion can be utilized for identity work? More importantly, what are the technological and cultural contexts in which online identity work might be more meaningfully viewed through selfies?

Instagram, mixed use social media for identity work

Social networking sites such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube fall into the category of “mixed use social networks (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015).” These platforms employ a variety of modes of communication in order to communicate with others of a social network. They provide the functionality of photography, text, video, links, graphics, and location announcement. Likewise, Instagram, a mobile photo-sharing social network enables its users to take and upload photos directly from their mobile phone and share them with friends as well as the public. Users can also choose to tag an image to a specific place during the uploading process. The location is then displayed to other users in a timeline. Following the growing popularity of check-in services and the rapid growth of companies like Foursquare, there are a growing number of Instagram users who use geo-tagging system. This phenomenon will be deeply discussed in the following section, theoretical frameworks.

Chapter III: Theoretical Framework

This investigation attempts to better understand the museum selfie phenomenon on Instagram in the focus of meaning of museum place and artwork as being used for identity work. This is a topic that needs to be explored more in great depth with various theoretical frameworks considering the multidimensional implications and social practices it embeds. In this paper, given the exploratory nature of the study, some theoretical approaches regarding new technology and identity work, nature of the art work and museum were used as broad frameworks to help add context and meaning to the findings.

Spatial self

A growing number of visualizations of physical activity are emerging on social media. Exploring what are the intentions and contexts under which these digital traces are displayed is important. What is the meaning of presenting a physical place using geocoded data, and identity performance that occurs via location-based social media?

Spatial self is the framework that explores the presentation of the self, based on geocoded data of physical activity (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). Research about identity, place, and online social media is the foundation for the spatial self. The author employs the “spatial self” which means that individuals archive and display their experience and/or mobility within space and place in order to perform identity presentation to others. Schwartz & Halegoua (2015) suggested the spatial self as a theoretical framework for understanding practices of location announcement and expressions of place online. It is known that social media users present a highly curated version of themselves through images, texts, video, status updates, profiles, and tastes and interests that appear within their profile (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). In this

way, the author infers that introducing “presentation of place” can explain the performance of identity via location-based technologies.

Humphreys (2012) suggests that practices of cataloging and archiving personal presence within place are used in the purpose of “showing off” or self-promotion. Location-based social media users utilize location-announcement for reinforcing other online profiles (Humphreys, 2007). In this process, the personal narratives of physical mobility on social media intentionally omit certain locations and emphasize others. This is because presenting “where I am” on a social network does not only inform others of our location, but may also signal mood, lifestyle, and life experiences (Barkhuus et al., 2008). The manner in which certain locations or activities are described, tagged, or presented can be understood as performative (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). Building on previous research, this paper considers expressions of the spatial self as performance for identity production. Through the contexts of digital expressions of place, we can understand the motivation for this location announcement (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). We can infer a story about people who took them, the moments and reasons they were taken, and the meaning of place through photos tagged to certain places (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015).

Artwork, inspiring object which facilitates transcendence emotion

Transcendence is a crucial human virtue thought to be valued by all cultures (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004). It is the dispositional trait associated with striving for and connecting with purpose and meaning greater than ourselves (Park et al., 2004). Humans exhibit and can further develop trait transcendence when appreciating (moral) beauty and excellence (Dale et al., 2017). Based on the existing literature, Dale et al. (2017) identified seven direct elicitors associated with an appreciation of beauty and excellence: another’s accomplishment, architecture, art, nature, skill or talent, performances, and vastness. Art and architecture are the

representative elicitors of transcendence. Art includes paintings, drawings, photographs, sculptures, engravings, and nontraditional forms of art. Architecture includes grand or moving architectural spaces or designs (Dale et al., 2017).

This experience and emotion facilitate elevation; awe, admiration, and gratitude (Dale et al., 2017). Elevation is the warmth and expansion one feels when encountering moral beauty and humanity's better nature (Diessner, Iyer, Smith, & Haidt, 2013). Awe is the amazement elicited by vast stimuli, such as certain forms of beauty and perfection that require a measure of accommodation because our capacity to comprehend the experience is challenged (Haidt, 2003). Admiration is the motivation and energy individuals feel when encountering excellence, extraordinary skill, talent, or achievement, and gratitude is the feeling of wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life in response to something done for you or simply toward the positive things in life (Algoe & Haidt, 2009).

In this context, museums provide the opportunity to appreciate artwork and architecture with the visitors leading them to feel awe, admiration, and gratitude. Museums allow visitors to associate themselves with something that is larger than themselves (Rounds, 2006). Museum visitors can transfer the special aura of importance that the displayed objects hold onto themselves (Rounds, 2006). In addition, a lot of the world's art is not just pretty; it seems to go further, presenting us with a thorough going idealization of life (De Botton and Armstrong, 2013, Chapter. 2, para.13). In sum, the author posits that art is a mediation to express identity, and people can transfer the transcending emotion they felt by appreciating art and integrating it into their identity work.

Kozinets et al. (2017) found the museum setting ideal for an identity work-focused investigation of the selfie considering an importance of the selfie's connections to art. They also

emphasized the need for a more contextualized understanding of a phenomenon that contributes to a holistic and cultural perspective. Respectfully extending the museum selfie phenomenon as identity work of Kozinets et al. (2017), the author brings a deepened psychological perspective to the meaning of art and art museum to human and society, and a way of expressing identity through this meaning. This paper provides a deeper analysis of comments, texts, hashtags and geo-tagging in museum selfie postings which reflect the technological characteristics of Instagram platform. This paper goes further than exploring museum selfie phenomenon itself, scrutinizing people's specific presentations of identity using the meaning of artworks and artists in our society.

In summary, a gap remains in the literature to focus on a cultural viewpoint on museum selfies considering it to be a set of identity projects. The author explores the meaning of artwork and artist through the literature on transcending emotion (Dale et al., 2017) and a book; "Art as Therapy" by Alain de Botton and Armstrong. By applying these frameworks, the author examines how people perform identity work through the experience of visiting art museum and appreciating artwork.

Chapter IV: Method

Netnography

Netnography is a method used to examine behavior and cultures and social groups as seen in digital (online) environments (Kozinets, 2002). It is a new qualitative research methodology that adapts ethnographic research techniques to study the cultures and communities that are emerging through computer-mediated communications. Netnography uses the information that is publicly available in online forums. A benefit of the netnographic method is that it entails the observation of visual and textual artifacts and as such, data collection and analysis come more efficiently than traditional fieldwork (Kozinets, 2002). A netnographic approach allows researchers to observe the population of interest (here, museum phenomenon) in an uninhibited, naturally occurring manner with seeing their visible online behavior (Kozinets, 2002). As such, netnography is based primarily on the observation of textual discourse, less intrusive to consumers and less costly to researchers than traditional ethnography (Kozinets, 2002).

Data Collection

This paper focused on Instagram as a social media platform from which data was collected because of its visual dominant characteristics, posting to a public domain and extensive use of searchable hashtags. Searches were conducted in November 2019 and encompassed searching for related hashtags as well as location tags for particular museums. The search started with the general #museumselfie hashtag (73,708 posts) and continued with the museums that are representative for each country (#LouvreMuseum, 3,033,039 posts; #gettymuseum, 176,546

posts; #orsaymuseum, 48,958 posts, #metropolitan, 340,794 posts; #uffizi, 220,822 posts and #pradomuseum, 19,004 posts). Screenshots were taken of those posts that were images of the self (they had to include at least parts of the body in evidence). These screenshots included the hashtags and photo description, texts, geo-tagging as well as the visible comments. For each search, considering the large number of data and the qualitative nature of this research, the most popular posts were investigated. In its entirety, our data set consisted of photographs and screenshots. Postings created by the official art-related institution accounts which were uploaded for promotion purposes were excluded. Data collection has continued as long as new insights on important topical areas were still being generated (Kozinets, 2002). According to Kozinets (2002), the strength of netnography is its particularistic ties to specific online consumer groups and the revelatory depth of their online communications. Thus, interesting and useful conclusions might be drawn from a relatively small number of messages, if these messages contain sufficient descriptive richness and are interpreted with considerable analytic depth and insight.

Coding and Analysis

The research followed an interpretive approach aimed at identifying emerging themes by iteratively circling back and forth between data and interpretation, from site to text (Kozinets et al., 2017). Interpretive researchers attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991). The role of iteration, not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process, is key to sparking insight and developing meaning (Srivastava, & Hopwood, 2009). Reflexive iteration is at the heart of visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings (Srivastava, & Hopwood, 2009). Following

Srivastava and Hopwood's (2009) approach, this paper answered to three-step questions to find out meaningful themes from museum selfies and categorize them. These questions are; first, what are the data telling me? (Explicitly engaging with theoretical understandings, in this paper, "spatial self" and "transcending emotion"), second, what is it the author wants to know? (According to research objectives, and theoretical points of interest; assignment of data to categories), and last, what is the dialectical relationship between what the data are telling me and what the author wants to know? (Refining the focus and linking back to research questions; refinement of categories into sub-themes). The purpose of the framework is not to efface these important considerations but to set a context in which discussion of such issues can be framed and related to a particular piece of research.

In this paper, the author analyzed the data (Instagram posts) and derived from it the "Spatial self" and "Transcendent emotion" as two main themes related to museum selfie phenomenon. Then, the author performed an iterative analysis of the data included in each theme to create detailed sub-themes. For a brief explanation of the process, one of the main themes, "Transcendent emotion", lent itself to six sub-themes after insights emerged through the process of visiting and revisiting the data. This helped the author reach a refined understanding of this phenomenon.

As for the first theme "Spatial self", the initial work focused on collecting posts used place-tagging systems to tag museum place. However, nearly all the target posts were tagged with such places, suggesting that people were using museums as part of identity work. Specifically, three methods mark a location on Instagram: the geo-tagging system, @, and hashtags. The geo-tagging system is a method that shows a location above an image of post. The @ symbol is used for pointing out a specific museum's account, and a hashtag (#), which is

typically used on Instagram, tags a text or comment by naming a place. These three methods feature within the place-tagging category, as they show where a user has visited. Each system is unique with different meanings.

The analysis categorizing the data into the three types reveals that visitors occasionally used the museum building itself or other characteristic spots, in addition to exhibited artworks, for museum selfies. In this sense, they recognized the museum as a meaningful place and used it for identity work. Thus, I defined “the museum itself matters” as a sub-theme. This involves people utilizing museum trademarks in their photographs when tagging spaces within the building.

In the stage of categorizing theme #2, All of the posts in theme #2 express identity and messages by mediating an artwork or artist, so I grouped them accordingly. However, as the author analyzed the distinctive meanings of those posts, sub-themes emerged by the significance of each post. Therefore, the author further divided the posts into new sub-themes. In some cases, the messages in these posts used the artwork’s content or the artist’s story to communicate users’ identities. In another case, the users conveyed their identities or messages by utilizing quotes related to the artwork or artist. Other users shared their transcendent emotions through artworks concerning their life’s purpose and dreams. In particular, professional artists mentioned an artist who influenced their career decision and explained why. Other users engaged in creative works articulated how the museum fostered his/her creativity.

Accordingly, the three sections identify when the artwork conveys the desired message, when a poster uses a quote as another medium, and when the transcendent emotions produced by the work connect to the writer’s life’s purpose or dream. These separate implications eventually

led the author to sub-divide artwork-related posts from one theme into three distinctive sub-themes.

The following categories— “Back to the past”, “Selfies as artwork”, and “Imitation”— have implications that differ from those in the three sub-themes mentioned above. Even though these sub-themes also refer to posts where the artwork or artist induce transcendent emotions, they focus more on the artwork itself rather than sending users’ own messages inspired by artworks and artists (sub-themes 1, 2, and 3). “Back to the past” expresses the emotion obtained when a museum exhibition contains objects from another era that accord with the user’s identity. “selfies as art” incorporates the artistic spirit present in posts where the user uses exhibition objects in a selfie. “Imitation” expresses the phenomenon of mimicking an object that has impressed the user. These sub-themes also practice identity work because appreciating, valuing, and mimicking an artwork reveals people’s characteristics. By presenting an era that impresses them, people display their innate curiosity or emotions, show their preferences. In addition, by mimicking their favorite work of art, they express their wit.

Chapter V: Findings – Emerging Themes

Applying the theoretical frameworks the author discussed in the previous section, new emerging themes related to museum selfie phenomenon will be discussed. Beyond these emerging themes, the author also shows some meaningful categories that contribute to identity projects using museum selfie in different ways.

Theme #1: The spatial self

The author focuses on a particular articulation of the spatial self (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015), one that is performed through online social media, in this paper, Instagram that record activities and experiences in certain places, which can be shared with other people. The spatial-self results in dynamic, curated, sometimes idealized performances of who a user is, based on where they go (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015, p. 9).

Almost all of the museum selfie posts on Instagram which the author analyzed for this study were tagged with certain museum places. Instagram users can choose whether they would want to use the tagging option or not. This means that people who uploaded the museum selfie posts intentionally chose to tag the place to the posts for certain purposes. In other words, through social networks like Instagram, Foursquare, and Facebook, participants present the spatial self without explicitly being invited to do so, in more “organic” circumstances (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2015). Considering Papacharissi’s (2011, p. 307) argument that through social media an individual “gains access to a variety of multimedia tools that enable the possibility for more controlled and more imaginative performances of identity online”, people might think that tagging art museum place as beneficial for their identity work. This aspect of the spatial self leads the author to think about place and space as strategically chosen markers of identity.

According to Schwartz (2014), the character of a place is socially constructed and created by the visitors to that location and the connotation of that place. Therefore, we can infer that when a user chooses to present their location in relation to a specific place, they are relating themselves with the values represented by that specific place. In this way, users are building their online identity through attaching themselves to the specific narrative of a physical place (Schwartz, 2014).

Then, we need to ponder why people use art museum places as a means of presenting their identity. The author draws a rational reason from the previous paper addressing the meaning of art museum. Besides the obvious fact that museums are the sites which represent the sophisticated taste and high cultured atmosphere, they can also offer psychological affordances that facilitate the directing, shaping, and (re)producing of the identity (Mukherjee, Salter, & Molina, 2015). As the use of social media increases within the culture and heritage sector, museums continue to provide individuals with an outlet where they can re-define their identities. This may happen during a visit, or after a visit through the (re)interpretation of shared content (Kozinets et al., 2017). Pekarik, Doering, & Karns (1999) also highlights introspective quality of museum experiences. Museums provide people with the opportunity to reflect not only on what is seen but also on one's identity in relation to the museum displays (Pekarik, et al., 1999). In this respect, the author can conclude that Instagram posts collected through hashtags or geo-tagging are visual narratives of personal interpretations of museum collections. In addition, by expressing museum locations through location-based technology, people can express their sophisticated taste and their deep understanding of art and culture.

The ways of using geo-tagging option emerge in three ways; 1) geo-tagging 2) @ to tag museum account to their posts 3) # using hashtag on their posts. Examples of each are provided in Figures 1-3.



Figure 1: Museum selfie using geo-tagging system on Instagram



Figure 2: Museum selfie using @ system on Instagram



Figure 3: Museum selfie using hashtag system on Instagram

Museum itself matters

Furthermore, popular art museum has their own meaning as a representative heritage in the community such as the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay, the Metropolitan, Uffizi, and Prado museum. For example, the Louvre, national museum and art gallery of France, is the world's most-visited art museum, with a collection that spans work from ancient civilizations to the mid-19th century. Louvre itself is a representative heritage of a mankind, not just of Paris. It is also famous for its fabulous architecture, Grand Louvre Pyramids, proposed and projected by architect I. M. Pei to stand over a new entrance in the main court, the Cour Napoléon. By taking photos of this Pyramids, people can inform others that they are at the Louvre. This means that museum place itself is utilized for identity work not being mediated by the artworks or the exhibition that they hold.

As Dale et al. (2017) revealed, architecture forms including grand or moving architectural spaces or designs also trigger transcendence emotion as well as artwork. Famous museums have their own architecture styles, trademarks, sculptures and interior designs that make people

recognize the place directly without searching for the exhibition which is held in them. The Louvre has its pyramids, Musée d'Orsay has its trademark “Clock” on the 6th floor where visitors enjoy taking pictures at. Also, it is known for being reopened after Gare d'Orsay, a former Paris railway station closed. The Metropolitan museum’s architecture is famous for the building itself and the floors where people can have a rest and once appeared in Gossip Girl where Serena and Blair ate lunch. Uffizi gallery and Getty gallery also have their trademarks, buildings’ architectural designs. Selfie-taking in connection with specific museum trademarks also can function as a identity presentation. Museum is a space designed for the display and performance of meaning. Visitors take advantage of that character to enact their own identities, borrowing for those identities a bit of the aura of special importance of museum. (Rounds, 2006). Next is an overview of each of these. Figures 4 is in The Louvre while Figures 5-6 are in the Musée d’Orsay. Then, Figures 7 is in the Metropolitan museum; Figures 8 is in the Uffizi Gallery; Figures 9 is in the Getty museum.



Figure 4: Museum selfie capturing Grand Louvre Pyramid of the Louvre



Figure 5: Museum selfie capturing the clock of Musée d'Orsay

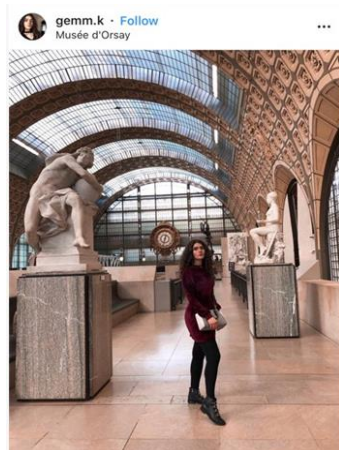


Figure 6: Museum selfie capturing the trail station aspect of Musée d'Orsay



Figure 7: Museum selfie capturing trademark of the Metropolitan museum



Figure 8: Museum selfie capturing trademark of Uffizi Gallery

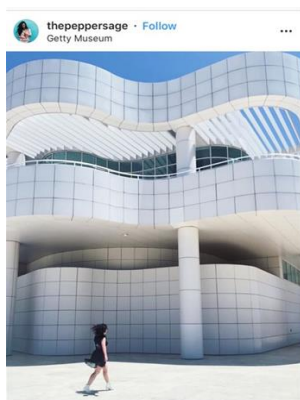


Figure 9: Museum selfie capturing trademark of Getty museum

Theme #2: Identity work through transcending emotions from artwork and artist

One of the reasons people visit the art museums is to feel inspired and transcendence emotion which leads them to have a wider perspective of their lives and world. Dale et al. (2017) suggested that humans exhibit and can develop trait transcendence when appreciating beauty and excellence, being grateful, and being hopeful.

De Botton and Armstrong's (2013) book, "Art as therapy", saw the art as mediation to reflect people's identities. They explained the role of art as following:

We are not transparent to ourselves. We have intuitions, suspicions hunches, vague musings, and strangely mixed emotions, all of which resist simple definition. We have

moods. But we don't really know them. Then, from time to time, we encounter works of art that seem to latch on to something we have felt but never recognized clearly before. It is a strange thought, that personal identity and qualities of mind and character can be discovered not only in people but also in objects. If this seems a bit odd, it is because we have, by and large, emptied the visual realm of personal character. Yet when we feel a kinship with an object, it is because the values we sense that it carries are clearer in it than they usually are in our minds. The performance of the artist, the art has powerful emotional influence on people. In this context, the author explores the theme of artwork and artist being a mediation to express identity (Chapter 5. "Self-Understanding", para. 1).

1. Artwork and artist as a mediation to express identity

People express their thoughts and identities by utilizing artwork and artists. In their museum selfie posts, this appears as a way of introducing and explaining the artwork and the artist. Often times, they add some captions or the phrases they want to emphasize. They also write the emotions and feelings toward them. According to De Botton and Armstrong (2013), "Since art has this ability to help us understand ourselves, and then to communicate who we are to others, we tend to care a lot about which works of art we place around us. We want to show something off, but we are not merely boasting. We are trying to let others know about our characters in a way that words might not allow" (Chapter 5. "Self-Understanding", para. 6).

They gave an example of this process by using the case of "enthusiasm for Riemerschmid's plates". According to them, liking for the plates reflects the recognition that it shows our deepest self; we can use such a plate to tell people something important about us. Therefore, art objects are the media through which we come to know ourselves and let others know more of what we are really about" (Chapter 5. "Self-Understanding", para. 7). Similar to

this context, people post the artwork on their Instagram as an identity work. Next is an overview of each of these.

- From now on, a copy of this work is on my wall for daily inspiration. The sky is the limit in this painting. Dreams can become real if you work for it! What do you get from this work?
- So glad I was able to see these amazing pieces by James Siena at Pace gallery
- Vincent Van Gogh's *Starry Night* was hands down the most amazing painting I've ever seen.
- Some Pre-Raphaelite healing for a Tuesday Morning. Dante Gabriel Rossetti 'The Beloved ('The Bride')' 1865-6.
- Noah Purifoy constructed his art out of junk materials and had a very unique outlook on art. - Inspiring!!
- Who would've thought that toilets could be such a great source of inspiration?! This was one of the most interesting exhibitions I've seen. It really invoked thought and was nothing like I've ever seen before.
- Van Gogh killed himself at 37 and never knew he became famous. a sad reminder that life is short and mental illness is so widespread. Thankfully today there are many more resources and help than when Van Gogh was alive, although imperfect

2. Quotes

Other visitors use quotes to express specific aspects of their identities related to the artwork and artist. Next is an overview of each of these.

- It reminds me of the educational philosophy of Waldorf Steiner. That whatever you imagine can be created out of the most unexpected objects.
- I feel that there is nothing more truly artistic than to love people - Van Gogh
- It is hard work and great art to make life not so serious - John Irving
- Just as pure abstract art is not dogmatic, neither is it decorative - Piet Mondrian
- "I think the difference between me and some of the other YBAs [Young British Artists] was that I was ambitious for the work, and not ambitious for myself."—Rachel Whiteread
I'm looking at images in a series of three, showing the stages of a public housing building being demolished, with a Robert Longo behind me. I've always loved art and it has inspired me throughout life. I love this quote by the artist as it is a good realignment for living life with purpose.
- Good artist copy, great artist steal - Pablo Picasso
- "Culture makes people understand each other better. And if they understand each other better in their soul, it is easier to overcome the economic and political barriers. But first they have to understand that their neighbour is, in the end, just like them, with the same problems, the same questions." — Paulo Coelho

- When you allow yourself to be unpredictable, you step from the known into the unknown, where anything is possible.

3. Expressing life purposes and dreams

As the author mentioned above, people can feel the wonder, thankfulness, and appreciation for life in response to appreciating artwork (Algoe & Haidt, 2009) then present this feeling and emotion as a way of expressing their identity. De Botton and Armstrong (2013) explained the following:

Art is one resource that can lead us back to a more accurate assessment of what is valuable by working against habit and inviting us to recalibrate what we admire or love. It lies in the power of art to honor the elusive but real value of ordinary life. It can teach us to be more just towards ourselves as we endeavor to make the best of our circumstances. Art can reawaken us to the genuine merit of life as we are forced to lead it. Next is an overview of each of these (Chapter. 7. “Appreciation”, para. 4).

- His life and work has been the main inspiration for my choice to be an artist. To see his works in person is one of the top moments of my life and I couldn't be more grateful to have had this moment.
- Today is five years since I started my dream job. I've learned more in that time than I could have thought possible, and I've had some truly out of this world experiences. I've sobbed my way through watching the original Hamilton cast perform, been cast on Turn, had a sleepover at Monticello with my besties, and co-written a show that is probably my proudest accomplishment to date. This fall, I'll have the privilege of performing it at the Kennedy Center which is equal parts exhilarating and terrifying. I've been privileged to know and work with some of the best people in the entire world, and my confidence has grown in spades. From my first palace selfie to the card I just got from the president of the foundation and his wife, it's been a wild ride. Cheers to the next five years!
- On stepping out of my comfort zone: I visited a museum by myself yesterday. Getting lost in rooms devoid of people but filled with art and hearing the wooden floor make squeaky noises beneath my feet - the same way my dream house one day will do, was a good first solo museum experience. To not get caught up in any other person but oneself. To shamelessly take a thousand mirror selfies. To breathe and move and stand still. To beat anxiety.

- Enjoying and looking at art can help surface so many questions and spark new ideas — even new ways of thinking. Art is so powerful, it can bring up new concepts you have never conceived of — perhaps concepts that don't even have words to describe them.

4. Back to the past

Lots of people have deep interests in different ages such as the medieval period, the Roman Empire period, Renaissance, etc. The museum is the best place to help people appreciate and feel directly the mood of those old ages. De Botton and Armstrong (2013) explained the following:

People differ so much in their aesthetic tastes. Some people are drawn to minimalist architecture and others to the Baroque. Our tastes will depend on what spectrum of our emotional make-up lies in shadow and is hence in need of stimulation and emphasis. Every work of art is imbued with a particular psychological and moral atmosphere. We hunger for artworks that will compensate for our inner fragilities and help return us to a viable mean.

We call a work beautiful when it supplies the virtues we are missing (Chapter 4.

“Rebalancing”, para. 4). Next is an overview of each of these.

- This painting by Pierre-Paul Prud'hon bridges the gap between Neoclassicism in the late 18th century and 19th-century Romanticism—“The Union of Love and Friendship” (1793). I had to stop here because this painting was on a #arthistory test I took in college. I actually really enjoy the paintings that were possibilities for exams. My relationship with these works has been developing over time, and having studied for them, they are even more special. They can feel like friends, some you really like and some you don't, but you have to know anyways.
- French 18th century paintings, furniture and porcelain, many of which once owned Madame de Pompadour and Queen Marie-Antoinette, also paintings by Titian, Canaletto, Rembrandt and Gainsborough, armories and Renaissance treasures.
- Contemplating the essence of Baroque at the Doria Pamphilj Gallery in Rome
- All smiles in the Ashmolean Museum - (I'm actually laughing at something in the distance, excuse the face) We all love a bit of Ancient Egypt don't we?!? Here, I'm standing outside the Shrine of Taharqa. King Taharqa (reigning from 690-664BC) was a pharaoh of the 25th Dynasty, ruling over Egypt and Nubia. The shrine is carved in magnificent raised relief and shows him being given life and power by various gods!
- A Neanderthal and I... This is the amazing reconstruction of an 8 year-old Neanderthal boy, whose teeth remains were found in Pontnewydd Cave, North Wales. He was probably alive around 230,000 years ago and to date, these are the only Neanderthal teeth fossils found in the UK. It was so important for me to see this guy today as the fact he

was found fairly close to where I consider home - really brings Neanderthals to life for me.



Figure 10: Museum selfie capturing “Back to the past”

Next is a discussion of other meaningful themes which were not covered in Kozinets et al. (2017), yet have implications on museum selfie phenomenon.

5. Selfies as art

The author found lots of museum selfies themselves are the artwork. Appreciating the artwork leads people to acquire inspirations and discover new ideas. They express their spirit and passion by creating other creative artworks. In this respect, the author may regard selfie as a type of artwork created against the background of inspirational artworks and good composition. In this manner, people present their artistic and creative identity. People are becoming experts in photo-taking and editing the photos that they took. This ability and talent to understand the composition and arrangement and take a high-quality selfie represent the identity as a talented creator.



Figure 11: Museum selfie capturing “selfies as art”

6. Imitation

One type of performance that appears in museum selfies is Imitation. It is often said that “Imitation is the mother of creation.” A masterpiece connotes excellence as it is without needing additional work. Mimicking a masterpiece can express identity, rather than function as a simple imitation. Moreover, this act of wit may reveal the virtue of an individual. Making same gestures with the objects of artworks makes the selfie unique and funny, thus increasing its attractiveness beneficial to identity work. This category might be classified to “Silly and Iconic” categories of Kozinets et al. (2017); however, they are different in that silly selfies are rather making funny faces or gestures and Iconic/mimicry is more about conforming to social norms of making similar gestures with other visitors.



Figure 12: Museum selfie capturing “Imitation”

These selfies are often accompanied by particularly clever or funny descriptions which can be classified as “Talking to the artwork”.

- You are just too good to be true. I cannot take my eyes off you.
- Your art was the prettiest art of all the art.



Figure 13: Museum selfie capturing “Talking to the artwork”

In addition, some visitors actually look like the models of the artwork. The following figures are examples of museum selfies capturing “Resemblance”.



Figure 14: Museum selfie capturing “Resemblance”

Chapter VI: Discussion

Summary of Findings

Recall, the objective of the study was to gather insights regarding perspectives of online identity work through visual content, museum selfie from social media platform, Instagram via a netnography of “museum selfies”. The intended contribution is to connect online identity work to art/culture objects and places and interpret this phenomenon through theoretical frameworks of location-based technology and inspiring content facilitating transcending emotion. The analysis of museum selfie posting on Instagram reveal two themes that emerged from the netnographic data with low-order sub themes for each meta theme. Two main themes are “Spatial self” and “Transcending emotion elicited by artwork”. The “Spatial-self” theme describes three types of Instagram posts that present users’ locations by how they used geo-tagging, @, and hashtags. The author introduced a sub-theme of “Museum itself matters” as well. This reveal the importance of museum spaces and further analyze the posts’ meanings. As for the theme of “Transfer of transcending emotion to identity work”, the author extended the analysis to explore how people appreciate artworks and then reflect the transcendent emotions that result in identity presentation by creating 6 sub-themes; “Artwork and artist as a mediation to express identity”, “Usage of Quotes”, “Expressing life purposes and dreams”, “Shifts to the past age”, “Selfie itself as the art” and “Imitation”.

Limitations

There are limitations to this research and to the netnographic method to address here. This paper does not include offline observations. Kozinets et al. (2017) performed offline participant observation which involves visits to the Broad Museum and LACMA in Los Angeles,

California, the Pace Art and Technology Gallery in Palo Alto, California, and the Inhotim Museum in Brazil during 2016. During these visits the researchers observed selfie-taking at the museums and engaged in selfie-taking themselves.

It would be beneficial if the author performed offline observation including visits to art museum and performing focus group interviews of museum visitors and depth interviews with museum employees, as well. However, as an active Instagram user who had experience of performing identity work using museum selfie, the author has a basic understanding of the internal process and motivations of the behavior. The author's Instagram posting of museum selfie was included in this paper.

Another limitation is that this analysis does not include advanced programming tools which are used for big data analysis. Considering a myriad number of museum selfie postings on Instagram, visual and other semiotic data analysis techniques (Kozinets, 2015) or leximancer, a lexicographic semantic analysis tool which uses a machine learning technique to determine underlying concepts and themes within verbal data can be utilized to find deeper and comprehensive implications. Researchers can analyze even the facial expressions of selfies using those tools. This can lead us to perform deeper discussion regarding visual aspect of this phenomenon.

Furthermore, through these analysis tools, the author expects that researchers can attain more strong generalizability and validity of the analysis. However, this paper tried to attain validity by applying theoretical frameworks. In addition, a great number of postings are supporting the findings of this paper.

The last limitation is the narrow scope of the postings examined--the number of searched hashtags of museums which were used for this analysis. This paper searched hashtags of six

museums including the Louvre, Orsay, Metropolitan, Prado, Uffizi, and Getty museum in Instagram. There are more art museums all over the world that people can take selfies at. However, the author expects that the findings and themes analyzed in this paper can be applied to other museums generally since the nature of this phenomenon related to the art museum is universal.

Future research

In the field of communication, and beyond, it is necessary to continue to explore the varying contexts and multidimensional aspects of museum selfie phenomenon, what it tells us about the notion of the self in cultural and technological aspect, and what it implies in the respect of contemporary visual era.

For example, future research would provide a deeper understanding of the museum selfie if it included offline observation, which this study has not. Interviews with a museum marketing manager or curator regarding an exhibition's message or intentions could examine whether their intent matches visitors' responses. Juxtaposing the museum's communication strategy against how visitors take selfies would supply exciting results for the communications field.

Moreover, future research could employ big data analysis tools to provide a more in-depth and systematic analysis of texts or comments. For example, it could analyze what sentiments frequently appear in museum selfie posts, or what words occur most often in below-the-line comments. This kind of study would enable researchers to identify the sentiments that people express when creating museum selfies for identity work. They could further examine whether users successfully convey their identity work by analyzing the posts' below-the-line comments left by other users, who are the audience. Furthermore, such tools can provide an

analysis of a myriad posting of numerous museums worldwide, thus increasing the possibility of generalizing the results.

Finally, research of identity work at museum place could examine video works in addition to images. The volume and modality of information transmitted through platforms such as YouTube lead to a bigger variety of identity work. Further analysis of content regarding museum visits through vlogs or travel logs on You Tube would furnish a more profound understanding of the museum selfie phenomenon.

Appendix : The IRB Approval Letter



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT & COMPLIANCE

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

*P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873*

FWA # 00002030

Date: 10/28/2019
PI: Angeline Close Scheinbaum
Dept: Advertising
Title: Exploring museum selfie phenomenon on Instagram as a identity work.

Re: IRB Exempt Determination for Protocol Number 2019-07-0112

Dear Angeline Close Scheinbaum,

Recognition of Exempt status based on 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

This determination is for a three year period beginning on 10/21/2019 and ending on 10/20/2022 at 12 a.m. midnight. A progress report will be required prior to this end date if research is still ongoing.

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

Research that is determined to be Exempt from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review is not exempt from ensuring protection of human subjects. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for the following throughout the conduct of the research study:

1. Assuring that all investigators and co-principal investigators are trained in the ethical principles, relevant federal regulations, and institutional policies governing human subject research.
2. Disclosing to the subjects that the activities involve research and that participation is voluntary during the informed consent process.
3. Providing subjects with pertinent information (e.g., risks and benefits, contact information for investigators and RSC) and ensuring that human subjects will voluntarily consent to participate in the research when appropriate (e.g., surveys, interviews).
4. Assuring the subjects will be selected equitably, so that the risks and benefits of the research are justly distributed.
5. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any information or unanticipated problems that may increase the risk to the subjects and cause the category of review to be reclassified to expedited or full board review.
6. Assuring that the IRB will be immediately informed of any complaints from subjects regarding their risks and benefits.
7. Assuring that the privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of the research data will be maintained appropriately to ensure minimal risks to subjects.
8. Reporting, by submission of an amendment request, any changes in the research study that alter the level of risk to subjects.

These criteria are specified in the PI Assurance Statement that must be signed before determination of exempt status will be granted. The PI's signature acknowledges that they understand and accept these conditions. Refer to the Office of Research Support & Compliance (RSC) website www.utexas.edu/irb for specific information on training, voluntary informed consent, privacy, and how to notify the IRB of unanticipated problems.

1. **Closure:** Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the RSC.
2. **Unanticipated Problems:** Any unanticipated problems or complaints must be reported to the IRB/RSC immediately. Further information concerning unanticipated problems can be found in the IRB Policies and Procedure Manual.
3. **3-Year Progress Report:** A 3-Year Progress Report must be submitted if the study will continue beyond the three-year qualifying period.
4. **Amendments:** Modifications that affect the exempt category or the criteria for exempt determination must be submitted as an amendment. Investigators are strongly encouraged to contact the IRB Program Coordinator(s) to describe any changes prior to submitting an amendment. The IRB Program Coordinator(s) can help investigators determine if a formal amendment is necessary or if the modification does not require a formal amendment process.

If you have any questions contact the RSC by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

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